

## John Ashcroft — The Best Man For the Job

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*The following are recent quotes on President-Elect Bush's nomination of Senator John Ashcroft for the office of U.S. Attorney General.*

"I think I'd better say I'm not leaning any way. But if you look at my record over twelve years, my instinct has been to give the benefit of the doubt to the president."

*(Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT), "This Week," ABC, 1/21)*

"My expectation is that he probably will be confirmed sometime in the next few weeks. I don't think a filibuster is justified at this point."

*(Senate Democratic Minority Leader Tom Daschle, Fox News Channel, 1/21/01)*

"... Sen. Teddy Kennedy (D-Mass.) has failed to rattle this extraordinarily qualified man, John Ashcroft. [ ... ]

"All last week, Kennedy viciously attacked Ashcroft and even threatened with pettiness to stage a filibuster in the Senate, which would push the required vote beyond a simple majority, to 60 percent.

"All that has done is diminish his voice among his colleagues to the volume of a mouse squeaking.

"One poll taken by NBC's 'McLaughlin Group' shows that 83 percent surveyed want to see Ashcroft confirmed.

"Even Sen. Tom Daschle, Democratic Senate leader, believes Ashcroft will be confirmed and privately believes that a Kennedy filibuster would be against the best interests of the Senate."

*(Steve Dunleavy, The New York Post, 1/22/01)*

"Ashcroft belongs to the Assemblies of God, an evangelical Protestant denomination with 2.5 million members. Leaders of other faiths question whether an active Assemblies man like Ashcroft should hold high public office like attorney general.

"Never mind that the assaults rub against Article VI of the U.S. Constitution: 'No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.' [ ... ]

"Indeed, the new wave religio-politics raises a new and wrongheaded standard for public service: An office holder may belong to a faith, but he better not believe in it. Or talk about it."

*(George Bullard, The Detroit News, 1/21/01)*

"To be sure, some of the attacks on Ashcroft are scurrilous. I've been poring over his record, and he's no racist. Yes, he opposes affirmative action and hate-crime laws. But all that means is that he's not a leftist. His demagoguing of African American Judge Ronnie White's nomination to federal district court was just that — anti-crime electioneering and nothing worse. People for the American Way is trying to dredge up the notion that he's also sexist, because he has opposed several women judges. But that, too, is a smear. The trouble with Ashcroft is not his alleged bigotry, and it's certainly not his personal conduct, which, by all accounts, is exemplary. ( ... )

" ... (O)ne of the consequences of winning an election is that you get to pick who's in your Cabinet. ... (A) president's own Cabinet picks should be given the benefit of most doubts. The criteria should be competence and a clean record — period. ... (B)ut no one has provided solid grounds for believing that Ashcroft would not take his job as enforcer of the law and the Constitution seriously. ...

" ... He represents, for good and ill, an important segment of this nation: the religious right. No one's religious faith should bar him or her from public office, and the passion of Ashcroft's Pentecostalism is no less acceptable than, say, the piety of Joseph Lieberman. ... Diversity in its best and broadest sense should mean not merely racial bean-counting but the inclusion of a spectrum of religious faiths in government."

*(Andrew Sullivan, The New Republic, 1/22/01)*

"Ultimately, the biggest problem with the nomination of John Ashcroft for U.S. attorney general may be that he is not a chameleon. ( ... )

"He is also a man of his word. When he says he will enforce the laws even if he disagrees with them, he has a record to prove he can do precisely that.

"He may make no secret of the fact that he personally disagrees with some laws — especially on subjects such as abortion — but he will enforce them. ( ... )

"The hearings have been far from pleasant for Ashcroft, but if there is any justice in Washington, he should be confirmed. Despite his controversial stands, he represents a vast improvement over Janet Reno."

*(Rich Hood, The Kansas City Star, 1/21/01)*

"Although John Ashcroft would not have been our first choice for attorney general, nothing surfaced during Senate Judiciary Committee hearings to impugn his fitness to serve as the nation's top law enforcement officer. Unless damaging new facts emerge to question Mr. Ashcroft's suitability, President Bush deserves to have his nominee confirmed.

*(The Dallas Morning News, Editorial, 1/20/01)*

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